

SUTTON BRIDGE

URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH,

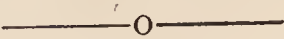
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To the Chairman and Gentlemen of the Sutton Bridge
Urban District Council.



SIRS,

I beg to present to you my Eighth Annual Report, together with Statistical Tables for the year 1904, in accordance with the Regulations of the Local Government Board.

I—Area and Population.

The Sutton Bridge Urban District is situated in the south east corner of the county of Lincolnshire, and has a maximum length and breadth of about one and four and a half miles respectively, and having an area of 5360 acres, with a population of 2107 according to the census of 1901, as compared with 2004 according to the census of 1891, shewing an increase of 103 during the ten years.

The district is three and a half miles inland, with large open drains ventilating the neighbourhood for many miles, thus preventing what otherwise would be an unhealthily saturated condition of the soil. Geologically the district is marshy, composed of a fine light sandy silt, to a depth of about 50 feet. The land is chiefly arable, potato and seed growing being largely carried on, and the majority of the inhabitants being engaged in agricultural pursuits. The whole of the district is very flat, intersected by the River Nene, which is tidal, and having an average rise and fall of 20 feet during the spring and 15 feet during the neap tides.

Natural
Increase.

The natural increase of population during the year, that is the excess of births over deaths is 36, compared with 29 last year.

II.—Vital Statistics.

Births.

The births registered during the year were 60, of which 28 were boys and 32 girls, giving a birth-rate of 28·4 per 1000 as against 29·4 per 1000 last year.

Deaths.

The deaths registered during the year were 24 against 33 last year, giving a death-rate of 11·3 per 1000 as against 15·6 per 1000 last year.

MORTALITY AT DIFFERENT AGES.

Under 1 year the number of deaths was					2
Between 1 and 5					2
	5	15			Nil.
	15	25			Nil.
	25	65			12
	65	70 and upwards			5

**Infant
Mortality.**

There were two deaths of infants under one year, one from Laryngitis, and the other from Sickness and Diarrhœa, and three deaths were due to premature births.

III.—Infectious Diseases.

Measles

The district generally has been visited by a severe epidemic of Measles and as there were more than half the children away from school, on July 12, it was decided to close the schools for 3 weeks. There was one death from Meningitis following measles.

Scarlet Fever.

There have been two cases of Scarlet Fever, one in Queen Street, and the other in a cottage down the Marsh, they were both mild cases.

Erysipelas.

There were two severe cases of Erysipelas, one at the Hotel Tap, and one in Crosby's Row.

Diarrhœa.

The usual summer Diarrhœa has been prevalent, one or two cases were very severe and of a Dysenteric nature, one infant died from this cause.

Small-pox.

We have been singularly fortunate in escaping this terrible disease, as there have been several cases in the surrounding districts, in each instance being imported by tramps.

On the 3rd of July I received a letter from the Town Clerk of Wisbech in which he stated that a serious case of Small-pox had arisen in the town and as the Fever Hospital was full of infectious diseases, it had been suggested that this case should be sent to the Port Hospital, I at once saw the members of the Emergency Committee and it was decided that the Chairman and I should be present at the Emergency Committee meeting of the Town Council and protest against this action. This Committee received us very courteously and after due consideration it was, I am glad to say, decided not to remove the case into the Port Hospital.

This leads me on to draw your attention once more, to the fact that there is no provision made in the district for hospital isolation and disinfection. We should have been in a very awkward predicament, had a case of Small-pox arisen in the district, however I talked the matter over with your Chairman and we came to an understanding with the tenant of the Old Foundry to utilise these premises as a temporary place of isolation.

Phthisis.

There was one death from Consumption. I would strongly advise you to include this disease in the Infectious Diseases Notification Act.

IV.—Preventive Measures.

In cases of epidemic diseases, disinfectants are freely supplied free of cost, the infected houses are visited by the Inspector at the termination of the illness and the rooms disinfected by means of Sulphur di-oxide gas.

The Schoolmaster is notified of the existence of any infectious disease in any house and the other children in the infected homes are kept back from School.

V.—Water Supply.

Shallow wells and rain water cisterns are the only means of water supply in the district. There are seven public pumps in the district, and these are very freely used by the inhabitants. The water from the granaries supply the pumps at the top of Wharf Street, and this has always been found to be quite a good sample of water. The water from the others is unfit for drinking purposes unless well boiled. In the majority of cases water from the shallow wells is totally unfit for drinking. In many cases these wells are surrounded by pig styes and poultry runs.

The greater proportion of the inhabitants drink the water collected in cisterns from the roofs of houses. When boiled it is a fairly useful water. I have always urged the advisability of thoroughly boiling and filtering all water before using for drinking or cooking purposes, and I would suggest that printed forms be issued to every household of the importance of this.

Water has been scarce in many parts of the district and in Withington Street I hear people have been paying at the rate of three-half pence for two buckets.

A good water supply besides absolutely necessary, would I feel sure be gladly welcomed by the inhabitants, and I trust this will be one of the many important and necessary improvements that will engage your attention during the coming year. Beside the expense, the want of a good water supply was the chief stumbling-block to the "Shone" System of drainage which was considered by you five years ago.

VI.—Sewerage and Sewage Disposal.

In the absence of an up-to-date and sanitary system of drainage, I would again suggest the adoption of the pail system in the district, and the total abolition of privy vaults and middens. I feel sure that this, besides being more sanitary, would give general satisfaction. The pails are regularly collected on certain nights during the week, and the privy middens and vaults are emptied as early as possible after notice has been given to the Inspector, and this is utilised as manure on land some distance away from the town.

Street Drainage.

The gutters, gratings and drain pockets are at certain intervals cleaned out in the bye streets at the east end of the town. This method, which has been in practise for many years past, consists of drawing long wooden poles by wire ropes through the drains from one pocket to the other, besides being unsatisfactory and insanitary, it takes a considerable amount of time, and has of course to be done during the daytime. I would suggest that the open gratings in Lime Street, Custom House Street, and High Street, be replaced with solid slabs, and having an inlet on either side for the water to drain into the pockets; they should be fitted with ventilating shafts. These open gratings during the summer and when they are being cleaned out, are a great source of nuisance. They are placed about a yard from the front door of the houses, and emit a most offensive odour; complaints are continually being made about these.

Crosby's Row, Young's Row, and Granville Terrace, I would again point out are in a deplorable condition, and as far as I can gather have always been so, there is no attempt whatever at drainage, and I would suggest that something be done to remedy the very unsatisfactory condition of these streets.

The street drains empty themselves into what is called the "tip," this is situated about 100 yards from the corner of Princes Street; as this is an open drain, the stench at times is a great nuisance to the inhabitants of that street. The "tip" again empties itself into the Westmere drain, this drain after many windings empties into the river about one and a half miles from the Bridge. This Westmere drain is a continual source of complaint, in the dry weather especially, and from a want of sufficient downfall, which is common to most of the drains in the town, there is a deposit of a most offensive, green, slimy, stagnant scum; during the year the banks of this drain gave way and so added to the insanitary condition. As an improvement, I would suggest that the "tip" be thoroughly emptied, the bottom and sides be bricked, and that large drain pipes be placed in such a way as to create more downfall than there is at present.

VII.—Dwellings and Areas round Dwellings.

With regard to this I beg to repeat what I said in my last report.

Most of the houses have a small plot of land attached, usually at the back of the premises, containing a hard water well, a soft water cistern below the ground, a sink for slop water, a privy vault or midden, a pig sty or a fowl run, and in many cases a manure heap, one can understand that it is difficult for a good supply of fresh air to get near the house, much less inside the house. The sinks in a great number of

instances are a source of considerable nuisance, as they are continually blocked and overflow in consequence, they are quite inadequate for what they are required, and emit a most offensive odour.

Many of the houses in the district are insanitary and unfit for habitation, and I would again point out that two cottages by the Peacock Inn, four at the corner of Bridge Road opposite the Oddfellows' Hall and two by Mr. Grimley's office are unfit for habitation. They are badly constructed, ill-ventilated, and with little or no area accommodation. The only suggestion one can make is that they should be pulled down and rebuilt.

VIII.—Factory and Workshop Act.

Since my last report the factory recently started has died a premature death, I visited this factory on several occasions and found everything satisfactory. I have inspected Messrs. Smith's Timber Company and found the outdoor privies inadequate and insanitary, I reported this to you last year and suggested that instead of wooden vehicles that either metal or earthenware receptacles should be used. You were given to understand at that time by the manager, who was one of your members that this should be done. I have reported the matter to your Inspector and requested him to write to the manager about this necessary improvement.

The workplaces in the district, that is to say places where dress-making is carried on, are few in number, I have visited these on several occasions and found there was no overcrowding and my suggestions of having the doors and windows open at frequent intervals has been practised.

Bake Houses.

The four bakehouses in the district have been inspected on several occasions by your Inspector and myself, in two I found there was no Abstract of the Regulations posted up and I suggested to your Inspector to get copies and forward them to these places. The bakehouses were found to be generally in a sanitary condition and are duly white-washed every six months.

Slaughter Houses.

There are three slaughter houses in the district, all duly registered, these have been visited on several occasions by the Inspector and myself, and when necessary alterations and improvements have been suggested and carried out to our satisfaction.

Dairies and Cowsheds.

There are several dairies and cowsheds in the district and these have been inspected on several occasions and found to conform to the regulations. I find that none of them have applied for registration, and I have suggested this being done.

IX.—Refuse Collection

There has never been any regular system of refuse removal and I have advised you in my last two reports to adopt the plan, an excellent one, suggested by your Inspector, Mr. R. Gregory, I will again repeat it.

That in order to facilitate the carrying on of this work householders are requested to arrange :—That ashes and house refuse be brought in scuttles, tubs or boxes of suitable size to the near side of the adjoining street, when it will be collected and taken away by the scavengers every Friday ; that a bell be attached to the scavenger's cart to give warning of its approach.

The best receptacle for ashes and house refuse is a zinc scuttle with handles, they are inexpensive and can be purchased at any ironmongers. That printed handbills be distributed to every householder to this effect.

All the refuse collected is deposited in a field about half-a-mile from the town.

X—Schools.

I have inspected the Schools on several occasions, those in the Bridge Road have had the warming apparatus put into a more efficient working order and this I understand acts very well.

I would advise an improved system of ventilation for the Infant Schools. As there are many windows and doors, and a ventilating tower in the roof, draughts are of continual occurrence when these doors or windows are opened, the air being vitiated when these are closed.

Infectious diseases as a rule are prone to attack children at the beginning of school life and I think it a mistake to send children to school at so early an age as four years. I would urgently advise some means for the provision of food for young children, who come from long distances, especially during the winter months. Many children come from a distance of three or four miles in all weathers, and often in order to avoid being late their meals are hurriedly taken and they arrive in anything but a happy mood for being taught.

In some Schools it is the usual custom to give the children cups of cocoa, could not this be done in our Schools, in the cold weather with perhaps the addition of hot soup.

I would suggest that children coming from a distance should be obliged to bring a change of shoes and stockings so as to change when their feet are wet.

In wet weather, children who come from a distance ought to be kept in the Schools and not allowed to wander

about the streets in the dinner hour, this would not be a difficult matter if games could be played or stories read aloud to them. The children as a whole are fairly well clad and look neat and tidy and they all seem happy and interested in their work. One cannot help noticing the care and kindness bestowed on the children by their teachers. I think it would be advantageous for a course of health lectures to be given to the elder children, and the drilling might be more efficient than it is. There are many ex-soldiers who would gladly give this instruction at a reasonable charge. I would strongly urge the total abolition of slates, there is always danger of communicating disease from the natural and primitive method of cleaning slates usually adopted by children.

The floors of Schools should be washed with disinfectant once every week and the walls white-washed twice a year.

It is only right when we have the welfare of the population to consider, that we should study any means to check and prevent disease, hence these remarks are naturally directed to the Schools and also to the infant population. I trust that you will give serious consideration to this very important subject.

XI.—General.

I must congratulate you on having had the fence put up on the river bank, this part of the Bridge Road has always been a source of great danger to people driving over the bank into the river.

The new night soil cart is in daily use and gives satisfaction, it would have been a still further improvement, if a hand pump could have been added, to empty some of the more difficult to get at vaults and middens.

The lighting of the streets has not been at all satisfactory till recently. Many times I have noticed the lights last winter were put out by 9.30 p.m., this besides being dangerous on dark nights does not conduce to the health of your district from a moral point of view.

Would it not be possible to use incandescent burners, this would naturally entail an extra initial outlay, but surely this would very soon be compensated for in the reduction of the amount of gas consumed, besides giving a more penetrating and satisfactory light. I understand that the Railway Company's gas account has been reduced one-third by the use of incandescent burners.

I would suggest that some means be taken to make the Dock Crossing a little less like a switch-back than it is at

present. I know this is a County Council matter, still a word from you would carry more weight, it is not safe to drive over this crossing at all fast either by motor or horse-drawn vehicles. The roads under your control would be vastly improved were they occasionally to be steam-rolled. This again would cost a little more at the start, but when once properly done, the annual expenditure on labour and metalling would be greatly reduced.

Again I would urge the advisability of framing New Bye Laws at an early a date as possible, without these it is impossible to carry out our work in an efficient manner.

XII.—Routine Sanitary Work.

I have in company with the Inspector of Nuisances made periodical and systematic inspections of the district, and many nuisances complained of were remedied to our satisfaction. Many drains in different parts of the town were found blocked, these were cleaned out and put into working order.

The Westmere drain, to which I have referred above, was cleaned out throughout its length and the sides eased.

The refuse deposited in the ditch between Chestnut Terrace and Withington Street was cleared away.

The kitchen at the Hotel was inspected, as well as the yard behind the billiard room. The drains from the sink were in a very insanitary condition, and the stench at times very bad. There were no ventilating shafts to these drains, or the outside privy, this has been remedied, but I suggested that the yard be paved or asphalted, and that an efficient urinal be added, these have not been done.

I am,

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

J. G. B. COLEMAN,

Medical Officer of Health.

January 2nd, 1905.